

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ADDIS 01649 01 OF 03 101651Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7998
INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 ADDIS ABABA 1649

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4 DATEIMPDET
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, ET, SO, US
SUBJ: CONDUCT OF US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS; POSSIBLE ETHIOPIAN
ATTACKS ON BORDER VILLAGES

REF: A) STATE 88087, B) ADDIS ABABA 1596, C) ADDIS ABABA
1594, D) ADDIS ABABA 1593, E) ADDIS ABABA 1588 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. ONE OF MOST FRIENDLY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OFFICIALS SEES US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS CONTINUING TO WORSEN
UNLESS US EASES OFF CRITICIZING ETHIOPIA FOR PAST AND
POSSIBLY "FUTURE" TRANSGRESSIONS. SUCH CRITICISM
STRENGTHENS HANDS OF THOSE ANTI-AMERICANS IN COLLEGIAL
DECISION-MAKING CIRCLES. NEVERTHELESS, HE RECOMMENDS
CHARGE TRY FOR TOUR D'HORIZON MEETING WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER IN ATTEMPT TO REVERSE CURRENT DIRECTIONS. THE
MAIN PROBLEM HE CONSIDERS TO BE ONE OF OVERLOAD IN OUR
APPROACHES ON BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC ISSUES,
I.E., HUMAN RIGHTS. ALTHOUGH THE ETHIOPIANS ARE AGAIN
BECOMING OUTRAGEOUS PROVOCATORS, WE SHARE BELIEF THAT
MOST OF OUR CURRENT APPROACHES, SOME REQUIRED BY LAW,
OTHERS BY BROADER FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, ARE
CONTRIBUTING TO DETERIORATING RELATIONS WITH NO TURN IN
SIGHT. END SUMMARY.

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1. MOFA AMERICAS DIVISION HEAD BERHANE DERESSE ASKED ME
AT SIERRA LEONE AMBASSADOR'S PARTY SATURDAY EVENING,
APRIL 8, TO COME ASIDE SO HE COULD EXPRESS HIMSELF
"FREELY" ON THE STATE OF US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. HIS
OBJECTIVE WAS ACHIEVED THANKS TO HIGH VOLUME OF THE WEST
AND CENTRAL AFRICAN RHYTHMS AND THE FACT THAT HE WAS THE

ONLY ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL OF ANY NOTE AT THE PARTY; ALSO, ALL OTHER DIPLOMATS WERE EITHER WESTERNERS, FRIENDLY AFRICANS OR YUGOSLAV. IN HIS OFFICE, BERHANE MUST USUALLY HAVE AN IDEOLOGICALLY SOUND JUNIOR OFFICER SIT IN ON OUR CONVERSATIONS.

2. BERHANE STARTED BY SAYING THE "BOMBSHELL" I HAD DROPPED ON HIM LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 5 WAS THE WORST OF HIS DIPLOMATIC CAREER (REFTEL E). HE WAS, OF COURSE, REFERRING TO THE DEMARCHE EXPLAINING OUR ABSTENTION ON THE IDA GRAIN STORAGE LOAN AND OUR FUTURE INTENTIONS TO VOTE NO ON ETHIOPIAN LOANS IN INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS UNLESS THERE IS PROGRESS ON COMPENSATION AND IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN ETHIOPIA. HE HAD JUST COME FROM A TWO-HOUR SESSION ON THE HILL WITH DIRG MEMBER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MAJOR BERHANU BAYEH, "WHO IS NOT AN UNREASONABLE MAN," BERHANE SAID, OBVIOUSLY IN CONTRAST TO THE ANTI-AMERICAN AND IDEOLOGICAL HARDLINERS IN THE DIRG. THE PURPOSE OF HIS LONG AND PAINFUL ARGUMENT, BERHANE CLAIMED, WAS TO TONE DOWN ETHIOPIAN GOVT (PMGSE) REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARKS IN HIS LAGOS SPEECH ABOUT US CONCERNS OVER FOREIGN TROOPS PLANNING FOR ACTION AGAINST ERITREANS. "THE DRAFT I POINTED OUT TO YOU WEDNESDAY EVENING WAS ORIGINALLY TO BE AN OFFICIAL MOFA STATEMENT" HE SAID. INSTEAD IT TOOK THE FORM OF THE APRIL 6 EDITORIAL IN
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NEVERTHELESS AUTHORITATIVE ETHIOPIAN HERALD (REFTELS C AND D) WHICH BERHANE ASKED I NOTE HAD NOT ATTACKED THE PERSON OF PRESIDENT CARTER. (AARON AND HARROP DURING FEBRUARY MISSION TO ADDIS HAD POINTED OUT SUCH ATTACKS ARE PARTICULARLY OFFENSIVE.) AS SOON AS I HAD LEFT HIS OFFICE WEDNESDAY EVENING, BERHANE HAD GONE BACK WITH MY COMPENSATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGE TO MAJOR BERHANU BAYEH WHO HAD INDICATED TO HIM THAT NO HOLDS ARE BARRED FROM NOW ON.

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3. THIS HAS, IN EFFECT, ALREADY BEEN REFLECTED IN DIRG
SECGEN FIKRE-SELASSIE WOGDERESS' VICTORY DAY SPEECH
(REFTEL B) AND THE SPATE OF ARTICLES CRITICAL OF US AND
CARTER ADMINISTRATION IN HERALD OF APRIL 10. THEY ARE
PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, PROBABLY
BECAUSE THEY SEEM THEMSELVES AS MOST VULNERABLE THERE.
(BERHANE DID NOT SAY IT TO ME PERSONALLY BUT DID TELL
OUR CONSULAR OFFICER, TO WHOM HE ALSO UNBURDENED HIS
SOUL, THAT FIKRE-SELASSIE'S COMMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS IN US WERE A DIRECT RESPONSE TO
POINTS MADE IN MY DEMARCHE PREVIOUS DAY.)

4. BEFORE WE HAD GOTTEN FAR INTO CONVERSATION, I CON-
VEYED SUBSTANCE OF POINTS IN REFTEL A (PARAS 3 AND 4)
CONCERNING POSSIBLY RENEWED OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN
ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA -- SINCE THIS HAD BEEN MY FIRST
CHANCE TO SEE HIM. BERHANE SUGGESTED RIGHT AWAY THAT I
SEEK AND APPOINTMENT "THROUGH PROTOCOL OFFICE" WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER FELLEKE TO CONVEY MESSAGE, AND LATER, HE ADDED,
TO GO OVER US RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA IN GENERAL.
IF FOREIGN MINISTER IS NOT AVAILABLE, THEN SETTLE FOR
PERMSEC DAWIT, HE SAID. REFERRING TO HIS OWN EFFORTS --
UNSUCCESSFUL TO DATE -- TO GET ME IN TO SEE FELLEKE ON
ANOTHER VERY IMPORTANT BILATERAL MATTER, BERHANE SAID,
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"ITS NOW BEST TO GO THROUGH PROTOCOL, BUT I WILL SUPPORT
THE REQUEST AND POINT OUT TO THEM THAT YOU HAVE BEEN
TRYING TO SEE THE MINISTER FOR WEEKS."

5. MY FIRST REACTION WAS A BIT ONE OF SURPRISE, I.E.,
THAT BERHANE THOUGHT I OUGHT TO SEE THE MINISTER BECAUSE
OF HIS POSSIBLE RECEPTIVITY TO MY MESSAGE. BUT NOT AT
ALL. AS OUR CONVERSATION CONTINUED, IT BECAME ALL TOO
APPARENT THAT BERHANE HAS BECOME TIRED, ACTUALLY FRIGHTENED,
OF CONTINUING TO BE THE BEARER OF UNPLEASANT NEWS.
ALTHOUGH BERHANE UNDERSTANDS US PROCESSES AS WELL AS
ANY OTHER ETHIOPIAN I HAVE MET AND IS OFTEN SYMPATHETIC

WITH ADMINISTRATIONS PROBLEM(HE COMPREHENDS VARIOUS AGENCIES' DIFFERING INTERESTS IN MATTERS SUCH AS COMPENSATION), HE CLEARLY FINDS HIMSELF IN INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS POSITION OF GO-BETWEEN, EVEN WITH PEOPLE WHOM WE HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED MODERATES LIKE FELLEKE AND DAWIT, NOT TO MENTION DIRG "MODERATES."

6. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT BERHANE DISAGREES WITH HIS GOVERNMENT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. DURING THE DISCUSSION, HE REITERATED THE GENERAL VIEWPOINT HE HAS SHARED WITH ME AND , HE STATED, WITH DEPT OFFICIALS SUCH AS AF/E DIRECTOR. THEY REFLECT PMGSE VIEWS DOWN THE LINE, BUT ARE OFFERED IN A PLEASANT TONE OF VOICE. HIS MAIN THEME IS THAT THE US, IN ITS LONG-RUN INTERESTS, SHOULD NOT STIR UP PMGSE ANTAGONISM. ONE WAY IT DOES THIS IS BY PUBLICLY SUGGESTING AHEAD OF TIME THAT ETHIOPIANS ARE ABOUT TO COMMIT AN ERROR, SUCH AS INVADING SOMALIA OR RELYING ON A FOREIGN MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM. SUCH STATEMENTS, BERHANE INSISTS, ARE NOT ONLY INEFFECTIVE; THEY PUSH SENSIBLE MEN (AND IN THIS GROUP HE INCLUDES CHAIRMAN MENGISTU) INTO THE ARMS OF THE
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FANATICS.

7. HE REPEATED WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE THE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVITY OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS MEASURES VIS-A-VIS ETHIOPIA. AGAIN OUR WORKS, HE FEELS, PUSH GOVT LEADERS TO COMMIT MORE AND MORE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND TO JUSTIFY THEM ON GROUNDS THAT ALL REVOLUTIONS HAVE THEIR ENEMIES AND THAT, AS IN WAR, SUCH ENEMIES DO NOT NEED TO BE ACCORDED STANDARDS OF CIVIL JUSTICE. SPEAKING EMOTIONALLY AS A MAN WHO HAS HAD RELATIVES KILLED AND IMPRISONED FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY MEASURES AND STILL HAS A BROTHER HIGH UP IN THE EDU, BERHANE SAID AMERICA SHOULD LET THE EXCESSES OF THE REVOLUTION RUN THEIR COURSE; THE LESS WE SAY ABOUT THEM, THE FASTER THEY WILL BE OVER, AND BERHANE IS CONVINCED THAT THAT DAY WILL COME IN THE NOT-TOO-DIM FUTURE.

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EXDIS

8. FINALLY, BERHANE SAID THAT UNLESS THE US BEGINS TO LAY OFF ETHIOPIA, HE IS GOING TO TRY TO GET OUT OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS AT THE MOFA; THE STRAIN IS JUST TOO MUCH. ALTHOUGH PART OF HIS REACTION MAY BE DUE TO THE PROBLEMS OF CARRYING OUT A DIFFICULT JOB, HE IS GENUINELY CONVINCED THAT US ACTIONS, PARTICULARLY ADDED TOGETHER, ARE STEADILY DRIVING ETHIOPIA FARTHER TOWARDS "BECOMING ANOTHER CUBA, A GARRISON STATE IN AFRICA," WORDS HE USED BOTH ON ME AND ON THE CONSULAR OFFICER. HIS VIEWS ARE WIDELY SHARED AMONG AFRICAN DIPLOMATS HERE AND EVEN A GOOD NUMBER OF OUR WESTERN FRIENDS WHO FEEL THE BEST POLICY FOR ALL WESTERNERS IS TO QUIETLY KEEP THEIR FEET IN THE DOOR AND WAIT FOR BETTER TIMES.

9. I HAVE FOLLOWED BERHANE'S ADVICE AND AM ALREADY SEEKING AN APPOINTMENT WITH FELLEKE OR, IF HE IS UNAVAILABLE, WITH DAWIT FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON OF ETHIO-US RELATIONS. I SHALL ATTEMPT TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERNS, AND AS BERHANE SPECIFICALLY SUGGESTED WOULD BE USEFUL TO TEMPER FELLEKE, I SHALL OUTLINE SOME OF THE IMPERATIVES IN OUR DEMOCRACY IN 1978 WHICH FACE AN ADMINISTRATION SINCERELY INTERESTED IN IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. BERHANE ALSO ASKED THAT I EXPLAIN TO FELLEKE WHY PRESIDENT CARTER COULD NOT HAVE OMITTED REFERENCE TO ETHIOPIA

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ENTIRELY IN HIS PRINCIPAL SPEECH ON AFRICAN SOIL. FRANKLY I AM NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THE RESULTS SINCE DIP TRAVELERS WITH FELLEKE TO OGADEN LAST WEEK (SEPTEL) DESCRIBE HIM IN A PARTICULARLY FOUL MOOD AND ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF US. FOR EXAMPLE, HE TOLD INDIAN AMBASSADOR ABOUT USG PROTEST OVER MOFA CLAIM OF US PLOT AGAINST DJIBOUTI BUT THAT HE SIMPLY DID NOT BELIEVE US.

10. ALTHOUGH WE IN ADDIS OBVIOUSLY CANNOT SUBSCRIBE TO ALL OF BERHANE'S POINTS, WE DO HAVE A FEELING OF OVERALL

INEFFECTIVENESS, AT LEAST AS FAR AS OUR ABILITY TO
ACHIEVE MUCH CONSTRUCTIVE BY OUR RECENT DEMARCHES. HE
CONVENIENTLY DISMISSES UNPROVOKED ETHIOPIAN WORDS AND
ACTIONS AGAINST US. INSTRUCTIONS WE CARRY OUT HERE CERTAINLY HAVE
HAVE THEIR PLACE IN THE WIDER SCHEME OF US
FOREIGN POLICY BEYOND THE IMPORTANCE OF BETTER BILATERAL
RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. ALSO, WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT
ETHIOPIA, LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES, WILL NECESSARILY TURN
AWAY FROM THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS TO A DEGREE OF
NON-ALIGNMENT ACCEPTABLE TO US. ONLY AN ACTIVE SIDING
WITH ETHIOPIA ON OUR PART MIGHT ACCOMPLISH THAT IN THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE, AND WE DOUBT SUCH IS POSSIBLE IN THE
LIGHT OF US PUBLIC OPINION. NEVERTHELESS, MANY OF EACH
COUNTRY'S ACTIONS AND THE OTHER'S COUNTER-ACTIONS ARE
TODAY PUSHING US FARTHER AND FARTHER APART. LAST
DECEMBER, ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER DESCRIBED ETHIO-US
RELATIONS TO CODEL AS "NOT VERY WARM BUT CORRECT." NOW,
TO USE BERHANE'S TERM, THEY ARE INDEED "TENSE."
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